

U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

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**Highlights of the Year**

Jeanne Hurley Simon continued as the Commission's Chairperson and Peter R. Young as the Executive Director. Nominated in late 1995 by the President, Abe Abramson of Montana and LeVar Burton of California were confirmed as Commissioners by the Senate in 1996. They replaced Barbara J. H. Taylor and Kay Riddle respectively.

Diane Frankel, Director of the new Institute of Museum and Library Services, became the 16th Commissioner with September 30 legislation (PL 104-208). Her position is as an ex officio, non-voting Commissioner.

In December President Clinton announced his intent to nominate Jose-Marie Griffiths to the Commission. A well known and respected information scientist, Dr. Griffiths is the University of Michigan's Chief Information Officer. Previous positions include Director of the School of Information Sciences, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and Vice President of King Research, Inc.

Continuing Commissioners are NCLIS Vice Chair Martha Gould, Joan Challinor, Mary Furlong, Frank Lucchino, Bobby Roberts, Gary Sudduth, Joel Valdez and Robert Willard. Winston Tabb represents James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress, a permanent NCLIS member. The terms of Shirley Adamovich and Carol DiPrete expired in July, but they continue to serve until successors are confirmed, or until July 1997.

In some respects 1996 was an active and event-filled year. First, NCLIS celebrated its 25th anniversary. Second, the Commission was fully involved in three major program areas: libraries and the Internet/National Information Infrastructure, policy for disseminating federal information, and the proposed Library Services and Technology Act. NCLIS also established a Web site to disseminate information -- including the contents of its reports -- electronically.

In other respects fiscal year 1996 was difficult and uncertain, with over half the year under continuing resolutions and an 8% budget reduction. The Commission met only twice and other activity and initiatives were restricted as well.

However, FY 1996 ended on an upbeat note. September 30 brought a budget at \$897,000 for FY 1997 (the same level as for FY 1995). Also in the omnibus spending bill was the new Museum and Library Services Act, making important changes in federal

programs for libraries and making NCLIS responsible for advising on the programs. NCLIS Commissioners and staff advised on the transition and planned for longer range work with the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The Commission's responsibility for general policy advice on the Library Services and Technology Act was a major topic at its December 1996 meeting.

### **Support for Executive and Legislative Branches**

In 1996 NCLIS advised on major issues of federal policy concerning libraries and information services:

1. federal support for libraries as proposed in the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)
2. copyright/intellectual property
3. access to government information.

NCLIS had frequent contact in 1996 with the Senate Labor Committee and the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee on bills incorporating the Library Services and Technology Act and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. NCLIS' consultation on the Workforce Development Act (S. 682) and the CAREERS Act (H.R. 1617) was the most extensive of any with Congress in recent years.

There was much activity late in the legislative session to see if the library portions of the bills could be introduced and passed separately. The library sections were incorporated in the omnibus spending bill for FY 1997 (H.R. 3610), passed September 30, 1996 and signed by the President that same day (P.L. 104-208).

The LSTA consolidates library funds for technology and services, retains state-based programs for most of the funds and removes federal targeting of funds for public libraries. The law itself states no priorities among the purposes it serves. The law moves administration of LSTA programs and money from the Department of Education to the new Institute for Museum and Library Services, to which NCLIS is to provide general policy advice.

In other legislative matters, Chairperson Simon testified before the House Judiciary Committee's Courts and Intellectual Property Subcommittee on copyright as provided for in H.R. 2441, the NII Copyright Protection Act of 1996. In June she testified before the Senate Rules and Administration Committee on access to government information in the 21st century. Plans proceeded for NCLIS-led and joint initiatives on public access to government information. One such initiative is with the Government Printing Office, for an NCLIS-directed study regarding standards for government information in electronic formats.

The Commission also commented to the House Commerce Committee on the Communications Decency Act provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and endorsed the recommendation of the National Information Infrastructure Advisory

Council regarding free speech in a digital environment. NCLIS objected to S. 1961's provision to move the Copyright Office from the Library of Congress to a U.S. Intellectual Property Organization.

NCLIS commented on the Telecommunications Act, the CAREERS Act and the National Technical Information Service to the Legislative Reference Division in the Office of Management and Budget. Commissioners and staff met, consulted and cooperated with officials in other departments and agencies such as Commerce and the National Archives and Records Administration.

As usual, NCLIS related to various offices and functions in the Department of Education. The Commission commented on the Office of Educational Research and Improvement's draft of research priorities plan, the National Library of Education's roles and responsibilities and the proposed replacements for the Library Services and Construction Act. The Commission and National Center for Education Statistics cooperatively operated the Library Statistics Program. NCLIS also kept in contact with the National Institute for Postsecondary Education, Libraries and Lifelong Learning.

### **Library and Information Services in a Networked Environment**

In August 1996 the Commission published a new research report, The 1996 National Survey of Public Libraries and the Internet: Progress and Issues. This was the third NCLIS-sponsored study of public libraries and the Internet, conducted by John Carlo Bertot, Charles R. McClure and Douglas L. Zweizig. The 1996 edition was done in part to gain longitudinal data on public libraries' Internet connectivity. Findings are summarized as follows:

- 113% overall increase (from 20.9% to 44.6%) in public library Internet connectivity since 1994,
- Differences in connectivity based on size of population served,
- Significant regional differences,
- No plans to connect to Internet in the next 12 months for 39.6% of the 55.4% of public libraries without Internet connections, with those serving smaller populations less likely to be planning connections in the next year,
- Public library Internet connectivity could exceed 60% by 1997,
- Differences related to the extent, type and costs of connectivity and to the provision of public access to the Internet,
- Public libraries serving 25,000 or less may offer the only public Internet access available to a community.

In a "Progress and Issues" section the authors identified issues for further discussion, including the remaining disparities, connectivity versus services, the goal of universal service, quality of network services, life cycle of public library Internet development, and preparing for the next survey. NCLIS will cooperate with the American Library Association and others to sponsor a 1997 study of public libraries' Internet connections and services.

NCLIS used the results of its 1994 and 1996 public library/Internet studies to advise the Federal Communications Commission on universal service provisions for libraries. NCLIS filed three sets of comments: May 7, August 2 and December 19. With the American Library Association, NCLIS planned and carried out a forum on affordable telecommunications rates for libraries. The forum was in New York City on July 8.

The Commission conducted a hearing, "Libraries, Interactive Services and the Information Superhighway," July 22, 1996, in San Diego, where it met in conjunction with the conference of the Interactive Services Association. The witnesses included corporate representatives, library supporters, directors and librarians, along with local officials. Many testified to libraries' important role as information equalizers for access to interactive services.

NCLIS spent much time in 1996 preparing to lead a study for the Government Printing Office on standards for creating and disseminating government information in electronic forms. In a June 1996 report, GPO noted that a successful transition to a more electronic Federal Depository Library Program depends in part on more information about agencies' publishing plans, cost-effectiveness of various formats and the standards used in and out of the federal government. Through an interagency agreement with GPO and using its contracting authority, NCLIS will be responsible for assessing standards to facilitate improved public access to government information. It is expected the agreement will be signed and work begun early in 1997.

Commissioners discussed with legislative and executive officials the need for a broader policy study of federal government printing and publishing -- in other words, the federal government's information policy regarding its own information.

## **Library Statistics**

For the ninth consecutive year NCLIS and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) operated the Library Statistics Program through a Memorandum of Understanding. A small task force of experts was established and met in the fall of 1996 to advise on output measures for electronic library services.

Data for FY 1994, from the first national statistical survey of state library agencies, were published in FY 1996 and FY 1995 data were collected. A steering committee recommended revisions and improvements for these annual data collections.

A national survey of library cooperatives was prepared. Cooperatives include library networks, systems, consortiums with formal arrangements to support library and information services for the mutual benefit of participating libraries. A universe file of library cooperatives was compiled and a survey instrument drafted.

For the seventh consecutive year, data on public libraries were collected, reviewed and distributed. The 1994 data were collected in the summer of 1995 and distributed in paper and electronic forms in late 1996. The annual workshop for state data coordinators for public library data was held in March 1996.

Academic library data are collected biennially as part of the Integrated Postsecondary Data System. The American Library Association's Office for Research and Statistics and a committee of academic library specialists advises NCES and NCLIS on improving the biennial survey. A training workshop on academic library statistics for state library representatives and institution coordinators was held in September.

On May 20-21, 1996, NCLIS and NCES co-sponsored the fourth annual Forum on Library and Information Services Policy, "The Impact of Information Technology and Special Programming on Library Services to Special Populations." Highlights are on NCLIS' Web site. The forums' objectives are to ensure that statistics about libraries and information services meet the needs of policy-makers and to help guide development of public policy on libraries and information services.

### **International Activities**

The Commission completed its eleventh year of cooperation with the Department of State to coordinate and monitor proposals for International Contributions for Scientific, Educational and Cultural Activities (ICSECA) funds and to disburse the funds. The allocation for ICSECA, included in the State Department's International Organizations and Programs account, was formerly under International Conventions and Scientific Organizations Contributions (ICSOC). The amount decreased from the \$175,000 of FY 1995 to \$35,000 for FY 1996.

NCLIS was not represented at the summer 1996 meeting of the International Federation of Library Associations in Beijing. The Commission did continue to host sessions to orient and share information with librarians and other officials visiting the U.S., usually under the auspices of the U.S. Information Agency or Meridian House International. In 1996 visitors were from Australia, France, Germany, Nigeria, Romania, Shanghai, Singapore, South Africa, Turkey and Venezuela.

## **25th Anniversary**

The anniversary officially was from July 20, 1995, the anniversary of enactment of NCLIS' enabling legislation (P.L. 91-345), to September 21, 1996, the anniversary of the first meeting of the Commission.

In April 1996 the Commission announced the winners of 25 Silver Awards, given to celebrate NCLIS' 25th anniversary and to honor representatives of all the people who have made noteworthy and sustained contributions to the strength of libraries and information services in the past 25 years at the national, state and/or local levels.

The awards were presented, to the extent possible, at events of the award-winners' choosing. Eleven were presented at the July 1996 ALA conference in New York City. Others have been awarded at state or local events.

To close the anniversary celebration, in September NCLIS announced a second set of Silver Awards to former NCLIS Commissioners and staff and to one U.S. Senator, Mark Hatfield of Oregon.

## **Publications**

Annual Report 1994-1995. 69 pages.

Bertot, John Carlo, Charles R. McClure and Douglas L. Zweizig. The 1996 National Survey of Public Libraries and the Internet: Progress and Issues. 67 pages.

Paper copies of the above are available free of charge from the NCLIS office. These and other reports are also available on the Commission's Web site: <http://www.nclis.gov>

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Electronic only:

Hearing on Libraries and Interactive Services on the Information Superhighway, July 22, 1996, San Diego, CA

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Young, Peter R. "Librarianship: A Changing Profession" Daedalus, Fall 1996, pp. 103-125.